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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2017

TAGS: PREF GH EK

SUBJECT: REFUGEE REFERRAL FOR RICARDO ECUA-MBA

REF: 03 STATE 326248

Classified By: REFUGEE COORDINATOR NATE BLUHM FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Embassy Accra hereby refers Ricardo Ecua-Mba to the U.S. Resettlement Program, together with his son, both of whom took refuge in Ghana in 2000. Ecua-Mba is the former Vice Minister of Education and Assistant Director General of the military cabinet of Equatorial Guinea. In 1983, he was falsely accused of having participated in an attempted coup and spent two years in jail. In 1986, he fled to Gabon, where he was recognized as a refugee. After having survived two attempted assassinations and three attempted kidnappings, Ecua-Mba fled to Ghana, where he is totally dependent on charity. He receives no assistance from UNHCR and the GOG has not granted him refugee status; in 2005 his second son succumbed to illness and died. We believe resettlement represents the only durable solution for Ecua-Mba and his son. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Post's refugee referral is for Ricardo Ecua-Mba, DPOB: 18 OCT 1959, Akonekien, Equatorial Guinea, who has taken refuge in Ghana along with one family member:

Son: Santiago Ecua-Mba, DPOB: 23 MAR 1983, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

¶3. (C) Ecua-Mba completed his secondary education in Mongomo in 1976. Three years later, Ecua-Mba participated in the bloody coup that toppled the Macias dictatorship. He admitted that he killed other combatants but did not engage in any human rights abuses against civilians. Soon afterward, he received military training in Cuba and joined President Obiang's cabinet as Vice Minister of Education, a position he held until October 1982. From February to May 1983 he served as Assistant Director General of Obiang's military cabinet.

¶4. (C) In 1983, Ecua-Mba was accused of participating in a coup attempt against the Obiang regime and sent to prison for two years. Through the intervention of Amnesty International, Ecua-Mba was released in September 1985, later fleeing to Gabon in January 1986. Though recognized as a refugee, Ecua-Mba had no job nor permanent home and his children were unable to attend school. His wife was unable to endure these harsh circumstances and divorced him. Twice he survived assassination attempts and three times he was nearly kidnapped. As his situation in Gabon became more tenuous, Ecua-Mba decided to leave for Ghana in 2000 along with his two sons, Santiago and Juan.

¶5. (C) Despite appeals from Ghanaian human rights activists, neither the GOG nor the Accra office of UNHCR has granted Ecua-Mba refugee status or assistance of any kind. At one point, he placed his sons in an orphanage, but Juan succumbed to illness in 2005 and died. At present Ecua-Mba is totally dependent on the charity, receiving sustenance from the

Adventist Church. He has few prospects for self-sufficiency in a country where he does not speak the language and cannot obtain a work or residence permit.

¶6. (C) Embassy Malabo cleared this cable and has no objection to the referral, but cannot vouch for all the details of Ecua-Mba's claim.

BRIDGEWATER